

Magazine Feature Section

The SECRET of PLAYING SECOND BASE



THREE POSES OF
JOHNNY
EVERS.

Johnny Evers Declares the Underhand Throw Is the One Essential Thing that the Guardian of Keystone Sack Must Possess Outside Usual Physical and Mental Qualifications.

IT'S the underhand throw," said Johnny Evers, when asked what he considered the one most essential quality of the second baseman. "It used to be said that the difference between a minor and a major league player was the last foot of the path to first base. The major leaguer kept going, and with added speed, if possible, while the minor player slowed up, if anything. At least that was the general supposition.

"It's that way about playing second base. Of course, there are all the other physical qualifications and also the mental ones, but to my mind the underhand throw is the one essential that makes the second baseman—the underhand throw, and equally important, its proper control. Anyone can throw underhand, in a way. But the throw is useless and worse if the second baseman doesn't control it. Control means as much on the part of the second baseman as it does to the pitcher.

"It's the underhand throw that quickens the time from the second baseman to first or second or third, wherever the ball is destined for. And it is the underhand throw that, in hundreds of instances, has checked the runner where there would be no chance at all if the fielder had to straighten out and throw overhand.

"When the second baseman is playing back and he stops a hot roller or knocks down a liner, nine-tenths of the time he hasn't the time to straighten up. It is here that the underhand throw comes in. And lots of times he has to grab up the ball and toss it while he is still running. It takes practice to make these hurried throws, and another thing, the youngster must be careful of his arm. There is a certain snap, of course, which one must use, but young players, especially are prone to put too much snap into the underhand throw, and as a result their arms don't last as long as they would otherwise.

"As a matter of fact, it is more of a swing than a snap behind the throw. Sometimes in a hurry I put more snap than usual. But, as a rule, my underhand throw is more on the order of a swinging motion, and it does not tire

the arm nor injure it. The youngster who starts out playing second base and uses a snap to his underhand throw will be laid up with a sore arm pretty soon. Sometimes when he plays but one or two games a week he may get by with it. But when he gets to playing every day the snap will tell very quickly on his arm.

"The real underhand throw is a natural motion if it is properly controlled; the snap throw is not natural, and hence it is injurious to the arm.

"The second baseman must have a perfect working understanding with the shortstop; he must study his companion guardian of the sack, and you will find that the best infielders are those in which the shortstop and second baseman work in perfect unison. Where they don't, it is a weak time to take the throw from the catcher or pitcher when there is a runner on, and whose duty it is to back up the throw.

Whenever the signals get crossed, and there is no excuse for this, or whenever the two are not working in perfect accord, then it means disaster, especially if the opposition is getting many men on the bags. Second is the keystone of the infield and it is right around that bag that many games are won and lost.

Evers says that Lafollette appeared to him the neatest and most graceful of second basemen. "He never appears to miss anything up, or he never did in the games I have seen him play," said Evers. "Everything was done with such apparent ease there didn't appear to be much effort put in his work; he didn't seem to spill himself about like some second basemen, and he was always graceful."

Lafollette still is graceful and neat in his fielding, but at that Evers and many another probably go after hard chances which Lafollette in his more youthful days never bothered about. Lafollette is not the fielder he was some years ago, but he is still a great second baseman, and he is still as fast as some of his more youthful rivals. Last year he played in 110 games with the Athletics, made 251 putouts, 322 assists, 25 errors and ranked eighth among American League second-sackers, with a fielding average of .942. And in 129 games he batted .280. He is still good for another season or so. He is a large, powerful man, and while he has been going back for several years he is still a great player.

Evers himself is one of the great second-



HOW THE
DIAMOND LOOKS
TO THE SECOND
BASEMAN

sackers in the game, possibly the best in the National League, and there are some who think he is the best in the game today. Others claim that Collins of the White Sox is the greatest. Every one knows of the great Tinker to Evers to Chance combination which won pennants and championships for the Cubs, and while the playing days of the other two are about over, Evers is still playing a game as good, or nearly so, as that he played for the Cubs. It is not merely his fielding about second base, however, which makes him a great player, but his work in every department of the game. Few there are who will dispute that to Evers, more than any one man, should go the credit for the

great showing made by the Boston Braves in 1914. And also there is little doubt but that last year had Evers played in every game with the Braves they would have won the pennant. He has been called the spark plug of the Braves machine, and it is no misnomer.

Maraville is a great shortstop, but he never really blossomed out until he had Evers working at his left side. And not only that, the entire Boston team worked better with Evers in the game than ever before. Stallings, of course, is the manager of the team, and he has been called the "Miracle Man." But the credit really belongs to Field Captain Evers. The latter injected an energy and vim into the playing of

the Braves which no other team had. And yet this same energy and vim were overdone in 1915, so much so that the Boston team became unpopular, in a way with the public, but especially with the other teams. It was not so much the fault of Evers, however. Players on other teams have always liked Evers. What he said on the field was forgotten by them after the game. They recognized his outbursts but as part of the game. But they did not so readily overlook outbursts on the part of other members of the team.

Crishaw of Brooklyn is a second baseman among the A. L. second basemen. Bauman of New York, who played in 48 games, ranking him in the fielding averages.

Niehoff, Viox, Zimmerman, who played 19 games at second last year, and Fitzpatrick, another good second-sacker in the National League, but none of these ranks with Evers. There are many who contend that Eddie Collins of the White Sox is the greatest second baseman in the game. Collins is very fast, and is a graceful fielder likewise. He is larger physically than Evers, and he is a harder hitter than his N. L. rival. Last year in 155 games he made 344 putouts, 487 assists and 25 errors for a fielding average of .974. He ranked second among the A. L. second basemen. Bauman of New York, who played in 48 games, ranking him in the fielding averages.